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Original short story: The Boy

Water; It reminded him of everything. While he looked at it, things seemed to be clearer, more profound and yet so distant. The boy found himself looking down again - mud all over his body – at his own reflection. How did it turned out like this? Wasn’t he loved? Didn’t he behave well enough? No time to think this one through, for they were coming to get him. In the past three days he had learn more than to smell them; he could feel them in the air. It was as if he could ride the waves of thin air and read them aloud in his mind with all sorts of information that wasn’t there before. They were coming, no mistake about it. He had to move and figure things out while doing so.

Three days ago he was walking around his village blissfully, not a care in the world. He had everything he could think of: food, shelter, play, friends and most importantly, unconditional love. He would wake up in the morning from his hammock, have a drink from the nearby stream, take a nice cooling swim in it, have some fruit from nearby plants and proceed to go about his day. Afterwards he would play hide and seek with the other kids, then have a lance throw off competition, wrestle his friends for fun and when he’d had enough, go and present himself to his mom. What a wonderful woman she made. She gave him all the love in the world, smothered him with kisses, cleaned him up a bit and fed him nice treats she had made herself. Afterwards he was off to meet with his dad – an important person of the tribe - to get his daily demonstrations. It was his job to teach him everything he knew about life, and even though he was a bit strict, he was kind and smart. After a long day he would take a bath down the river and spent there quite some time looking at himself in the water. Before the day ended, he had to go with the other boys to a special place. A circle of stone bathed in moonlight where his grandfather would tell weird but amazing stories about everything from the creation of the world and how their tribe came to be, to stories of their heroes and simple things from life they must never forget. Life was pleasant and full of promise.

Next day when he woke up everything went about as normal, but he felt a little off. His own balance was slightly tipped when walking and he felt a little sad while looking in the water. It was as if someone had carved a small hole in his heart during the night while he slept or maybe it was a sense, a feeling of things to come. After playing with his friends and helping his mom he went to meet with his dad. As he was walking towards the usual place, he noticed something odd. It felt as if he was being observed from a distance. When he gazed upon her and everything became silent. There was no time, there was no space, there was only her. She was looking right at him and when she saw he was dumbstruck she giggled. He noticed what state he was in and smiled at her with a warm understanding smile. She smiled back and gazed at him through the newfound connection. It felt as if they had known each other forever. It was not to last.

Suddenly he felt looked at again but from another direction, only this time he felt fear. When he turned around, the powerful figure of his father was looking piercingly into his eyes. He was angry. But why was he so enraged? What had he done? His father exclaimed in a solemn, serious and thunderous voice: “You must die. Prepare yourself”. Die? Die? Just like that? His world came rushing down into a spiral of despair but he knew his father and there was nothing to be done. He went sadly to the river, took a bath a little longer than usual. When he went to the circle and sat on one of the beautifully carved stones he looked intently at the sky, the stars and realized how small his was. His grandfather in all seriousness and understanding what was about to happen said a few words and told him a story about a lion’s head coming out of a rose. The story made no sense to him and at that moment it didn’t matter. The old wise man gave him his pipe and told him too smoke. Everything twisted itself. Stones and trees were losing their form and the men from the tribe came running towards him. They were tribesmen, but their heads had animal shapes that looked hungry. Not masks, their faces were that of animals. They had huge lances and were running towards his direction. He started running and screamed in terror.

The water; it’s always the water. He was tired of running. For three days he had been running, disguising himself with mud, making his own lance out of branches and surviving purely on instinct. He was sick of it, he didn’t want to run nor feel afraid anymore. Yet, he was afraid and rightly so. Regardless of his fear he turned around and saw them. They got there rather quick. He looked at them with determination and ran towards them with his puny little lance. They were too many and he was overwhelmed by their power. He was sure his announced death was to come and so he passed out. Vivid dreams of a green eagle looking at a lion came about.

When he woke up the women of the tribe were cleaning him. He was startled at this sight. Even the smiling girl was there. He was sure he had died. He looked at the men who had also gathered around him. He asked his grandfather about his death to which he replied: “You did die. But now you are reborn and are truly one of us. No longer are you considered a child and thus we honor you.” He was given a name and again was made to smoke from the pipe. This time the visions were different and he saw himself as a giant looking at the world from above with radiance to his being that felt of newness and strength. The boy was dead. Something else, something great had taken his place.